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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
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Agenda item 2

REVIEW OF THE FUNCTIONING OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL MACHINERY OF UNCTAD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CARTAGENA COMMITMENT AND SUBSEQUENT RELEVANT DECISIONS OF THE BOARD

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. As the principal organ of the General Assembly in the field of trade and development, UNCTAD provides the most appropriate focal point, within the United Nations proper, for the integrated treatment of development and interrelated issue in key areas including trade, finance, investment, services, technology and sustainable development, in the interests of all countries, particularly those of developing countries. In the four years since the eighth session of the Conference, UNCTAD has implemented the Cartagena Commitment and confirmed the general validity of the direction taken, but there exists scope to revitalize and remodel the intergovernmental machinery of UNCTAD in order to make it more responsive to the needs of a rapidly changing world economy. UNCTAD's fundamental mandate is comprehensive and allows for such revitalization. This being so, and in view of the resource constraints, it is essential to establish clear priorities and to construc the intergovernmental machinery around them. Consequently, for the efficient and transparent conduct of business, the Trade and Development Board recommends to the Conference that the functioning of UNCTAD's intergovernmental machinery be based o the following guidelines:

(a) There should be greater coherence and simplicity in the intergovernmental structures, functions and reporting lines, with more clearly defined roles and functions assigned to each body. In particular, a clear distinction between policy decision-making and expert technical work should be mirrored in the structures.

(b) Decision-making should be commensurate with the level of each body in the overall hierarchy.

(c) UNCTAD's work programme should be strengthened through improved transparency and supervision of the budget and programme of work and of technical cooperation activities.

(d) Measures should be taken to ensure effective follow-up and evaluation of the actions agreed upon.

(e) Greater attention should be given to the handling of cross-sectoral issues which have implications across UNCTAD's work programmes, including within the secretariat.

(f) Better use should be made of expert meetings of short duration to deal with technical issues.

(g) Technical matters discussed at the expert level should be reported to the relevant parent body, which may transmit them to the Board as appropriate.

(h) The calendar of meetings must be better regulated, and the overall number of meetings should be reduced. In general, simultaneous meetings and back-to-back meetings should be avoided, unless appropriate. More time should be allowed to delegations for adequate preparation and coordination. Documents should be available in all languages sufficiently in advance of meetings in accordance with the existing rules.

(i) Cooperation with, and participation by, non-governmental interests and the business/private sector should be enhanced in order to adapt UNCTAD to the gradually more market-oriented global economy.

(j) Special consideration should be given to the question of improving the participation of developing-country experts in UNCTAD technical meetings, including the question of financing their participation.

(k) The Secretary-General of UNCTAD is encouraged to strengthen cooperation and coordination with other international organizations working in related areas, such as the WTO and ITC.

2. In the course of the exercise to improve the functioning of the intergovernmental machinery, it may be necessary to consider moving an existing wor programme from the body currently responsible for it to another body which may execute the work programme more efficiently. In some other cases, an existing body may be retained though its work programme may need to be modified.

3. On the understanding that the final design of the intergovernmental structures, including the number, names and mandates of individual bodies, will be determined in the light of the decisions taken on the substantive programmes, the following specific recommendations are put forward:

(a) In executing its mandated functions, the Trade and Development Board can meet in regular or executive sessions. The regular session of the Board could be convened in one part in autumn for approximately 10 working days. At that session, a segment should be included to deal with a substantive policy item with a view to attracting high-level participation. Personalities from the public, private/business and academic sectors in areas related to UNCTAD's work should be invited to attend. At its regular session, the Board would continue to deal with interdependence and global economic issues from a trade and development perspective. It would also review at its annual session progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa. The Board would also act to ensure better horizontal coordination.

(b) The Board could meet in executive session three times throughout the year, with six weeks prior notice, to deal with policy as well as management and institutional matters and when it is agreed that there are urgent matters that cannot be deferred to the regular session. Executive sessions will normally be confined to one-day's duration, as foreseen in the Cartagena Commitment.

(c) The Bureau of the Trade and Development Board would be elected at each regular session to serve for the whole year and should be authorized to despatch housekeeping business including adminsitrative and procedural matters when the Board itself is not in session. The extent of the Bureau's authority needs to be further defined.

(d) The Board should have a smaller number of subsidiary bodies. Its immediate subsidiary bodies which may be known as Commissions would perform integrated policy work on a whole range of UNCTAD programmes in their respective areas of competence. Sessions of the Commissions should be as short as possible, not exceeding five days. The Commissions would have specific mandates and greater delegation of decision-making on matters of substance. Each Commission may convene expert meetings of short duration, not exceeding three days, the outcome of which need not be in the form of agreed conclusions. It would be for the parent Commission to consider their findings and to discuss the policy implications. Commissions should, when appropriate, make the results of expert meetings called under their auspices available to other relevant Commissions.

(e) The reports of the Commissions could record the action taken in two separate annexes, as follows:

A. Action taken by the Commission on its own authority

B. Action referred to the Trade and Development Board for final decision.

Annex A would be taken note of by the Board without discussion. Annex B would exist only when specific action by the Board is necessary.